

**Statement of Dennis R. Schrader
Director, Office of Homeland Security
State of Maryland**

**Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
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*TESTIMONY OF
THE DIRECTOR DENNIS R. SCHRADER
MARYLAND OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BEFORE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
OCTOBER 3, 2003*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Good morning. Mr. Davis, Mr. Waxman and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear to discuss issues critical to the citizens and guests of Maryland and the National Capital Region.

I am Dennis R. Schrader, Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security for the State of Maryland. I am representing Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. who could not be with you today, but appreciates and shares your focus on Homeland Security and the National Capital Region.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 highlighted our need to step away from limited jurisdictional thinking and responses. The lessons learned from that day propelled us to think, plan, and act as an integrated region, with common concerns, challenges, and mutually supportive capabilities.

As my good friend and Adjutant General for the State of Maryland, Major General Bruce Tuxill stated in his April 10 testimony to this committee -- the National Capital Region title should not be tied to an old definition. The statutory definition of the region, founded on decades old commuting patterns, consists of the District of

Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William, plus the City of Alexandria. In this age of mobility, we have not only Marylanders, but also people transiting Maryland from Pennsylvania and Delaware to get to jobs in the District and Northern Virginia. Likewise, commuters from regions once considered southern Virginia are regularly working within the region. Artificial boundaries cannot limit our actions. Interdependencies of transportation, utility, and commercial sectors create common bonds that transcend jurisdictional lines. These interdependencies are integral to the economic security of the National Capitol Region, the states of Maryland and Virginia, and, in fact, the Nation as a whole.

To this end, my fellow Senior Policy Group members from Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Homeland Security have been active partners. Together, we seek enhanced preparedness and public safety throughout the National Capital Region as well as in our tri-state area.

I applaud this Committee and the members of the Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia Congressional Delegations. Their attention to the unique characteristics of the National Capital Region and their support of the Senior Policy Group's efforts significantly enhances our ability to provide for the security of the citizens, residents, businesses, and visitors to the region. Or, as was so eloquently stated so many years ago:

“ . . .ESTABLISH JUSTICE, INSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY, PROVIDE FOR THE
COMMON DEFENCE, PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE, AND SECURE THE
BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY . . .”

II. DETAILED RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE QUESTIONS:

You asked that we address several specific areas of interest to this Committee.

WHAT PROCEDURES ARE IN PLACE TO RETROSPECTIVELY ASSESS THE SITUATION AND HOW DECISIONS WERE MADE?

In Maryland, as in other states, it is standard practice for emergency operations centers to chronologically record an emergency as well as to produce periodic status reports. In the case of Isabel, these procedures recorded pre-storm, storm, and post-storm actions. Examples of information include key metrics, significant information related to the lifecycle of the storm and storm damage, specific requests made to operations centers and the center's response. Following the emergency, this record provides the data to identify both the successes and challenges of an incident and permits a systematic review and assessment of policies, decisions, and actions which are compiled in an after incident report. Currently, Maryland is working with the Department of Homeland Security on the implementation of the Remedial Action Management Program (RAMP). An effort lead by FEMA, this will provide for a more consistent, uniform, and ultimately actionable approach to addressing issues from events. We have already begun collecting recommendations from agencies as well as gathering several

hundred pages of data recorded at the emergency operations centers for analysis and review.

In Maryland, the Ehrlich-Steele administration is committed to a systematic review and assessment of the public and private response to Isabel. We believe the after incident report will be a fundamental tool for the identification of opportunities to enhance our preparedness for the future.

Throughout this event, the Ehrlich-Steele administration was committed to an integrated response. This commitment continues. Following the publication of the traditional after incident report, the state will be hosting a summit of private sector and not-for-profit organizations, with state agencies and county and local government representatives to review our integrated performance and to search for opportunities for improved future performance.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS ARE THERE FOR REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS AS A WHOLE?

The governmental agencies within Maryland – at all levels – responded well to the situation. In many cases, emergent and situational needs were successfully addressed at the local or county level. In incidences beyond local government’s capabilities, frequent and efficient communication between State and local government fostered accurate and timely state support. While regional preparedness is strong, the Ehrlich-Steele administration is committed to

enhancing preparedness and public safety. Corrective actions based on the lessons learned will improve the overall ability of government agencies and NGO's to respond to situations.

The storm has raised several policy issues that require examination. In addition to the federal issues of the fragility of the electric power grid, regional and local issues include:

- over-head vs. in-ground power lines
- ice availability and distribution
- back-up power requirements of and supplies to critical infrastructure such as water supply, traffic signals, refrigeration of medical supplies, and support of non-hospital care facilities.

A disaster is, by definition, an event beyond the standard capabilities of immediate response. Had this simply been a spring shower with localized heavy rain, there would be no question of the ability to respond. With the widespread impact of a 600 mile wide, level-2 hurricane, our emergency management resources were tested – and they met that test. For regional preparedness as a whole, this suggests a positive trend. This does not suggest that we can respond to every disaster with no waiting time, and minimal damage. However, we are prepared to deal with disasters.

HOW WERE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES KEPT INFORMED BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE HURRICANE?

Throughout the storm, the primary outlet for current information was, and continues to be, the local media. The media's responsiveness to press releases and bulletins before, during, and after the storm was impressive and truly a public service. While there are specialized weather notification processes (cable TV's Weather Channel, or NOAA radio alerts), the commercial media outlets were the most common source of information from the State, County and Local agencies, and federal and state emergency management agencies. Information was available on internet sites, including the site hosted by the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, yet traditional broadcast media was the resource most used by our citizens.

HOW CAN THE REGION BETTER PREPARE AND RESPOND IN THE FUTURE?

The issues of Homeland Security, and Domestic Preparedness are matters which shall never be "solved". Our best hope is for an evolutionary process, in which we use what we learn from each incident to improve our abilities to address the next. There are always opportunities for improvement, and Maryland will be looking closely at lessons learned. Data are still being collected and analyzed, yet even at this early date certain assertions can be made.

- Continued *consistent* support of regional, state, and local emergency management and response capabilities is necessary to ensure an appropriate level of readiness for the next incident. Whatever that incident may be. We know that next test is coming. We do not know where or when. As best as possible, we must prepare on all fronts.
- While addressing issues on this broad front, we must carefully manage resources to provide the greatest return to our citizens for the investment of their tax dollars.